

# Gamma

**Romans 2:17-3:9**

## **Study 4 The Religious need the gospel 11**

### **Case 1**

**Chong Wah was trying to share the gospel with his workmates at the AEON supermarket in Subang Jaya. However as soon as he mentioned the word “church” and “Christians” he got an earful of criticisms chief of which was the fact that Christians are hypocrites**

#### **1. How can he answer these critics**

First, whether or not Christianity is true does not depend on how its adherents behave.

Christianity does not stand or fall on the way Christians have acted throughout history or are acting today. Christianity stands or falls on the person of Jesus, and Jesus was not a hypocrite. He lived consistently with what He taught, and at the end of His life He challenged those who had lived with Him night and day, for over three years, to point out any hypocrisy in Him. His disciples were silent, because there was none. Since Christianity depends on Jesus, it is incorrect to try to invalidate the Christian faith by pointing to horrible things done in the name of Christianity. Ruth Bell Graham, wife of international evangelist Billy Graham, shares the true account of a young college student from India by the name of Pashi who once told her, "I would like to believe in Christ. We of India would like to believe in Christ. But we have never seen a Christian who was like Christ." Ruth Graham says that when she consulted Dr. Akbar Haqq about what might be the best response to Pashi's challenge, Haqq answered decisively, "That is quite simple. I would tell Pashi, 'I am not offering you Christians. I am offering you Christ.'" —

Second, Christ was not a hypocrite in any sense of the word. Often even critics agree with this point, exalting the high moral standards of Christ without understanding His larger claims. Third, seemingly hypocritical behavior on a large scale, such as the Inquisition, does not invalidate Christianity, either. Again, this does not excuse hypocritical behavior, but separates it from the center of Christianity: Christ and His claims.

Fourthly, the influence of Christianity through the generations have largely been positive. Look at all the major scientific breakthroughs in history have come from countries influenced by the Christian gospel. Look at the abolition of slavery, the start of homes for orphans, the poor and homeless, the start of hospitals, universities have all been on the back of Christian influence

Fifthly, Christians are a work in progress they are forgiven sinners and nevertheless sinners on the road to transformation and recovery. It does not excuse their behavior but puts their behavior in the proper perspectives.

Sixthly there are lots of folk who claims to be Christian and do things in the name of Christ who are in reality not Christians. We've all heard of medical quacks—but have you stopped going to the doctor? There have been news reports of hamburger contaminated with E. coli—but have you stopped eating Big Macs?

## **Case 2**

**Chong Wah runs a chain of supermarkets and one of his church members suggested he play some general Christian music and even put some non offensive Christian posters of events. Chong Wah immediately rejected the idea because he quoted Romans 2:24 how the Name of God is blasphemed because of the Jews. Chong Wah said that his life is far from perfect and he does not lead bible study nor is he a leader in church he would be a hypocrite and stumble people. His own employees do not even know he is a Christian**

**2. Do you think Chong Wah has correctly applied the verse in Romans?**

**3. Do you let others know you are a Christian, why or why not what is your personal struggle with this?**

## **Case 3**

**Thye Hong had always been very keen on serving in the church. He loved going to help the poor Myanmar refugees who were squatting in Klang. He taught in the school of migrants as well as help distribute food. His involvement involved a lot of sacrifice from his time and financial resources. He even switched jobs to a lighter one accepting a pay cut to do more ministry. On his interaction with other church members he was increasingly contemptuous of the leadership whom he accused of being all talk and no action. He did not attend any bible studies in the church because he felt that the spirituality of these leaders were so low that they could not possibly teach him anything. He constantly badgered the leaders to be more involved in social action to the poor and condemned their weekly bible study because it was just filling people with head knowledge with no transformation at all. He had contemplated going to Bible college**

but did not find one that was spiritual enough. He takes on line bible courses and does very well and can easily debate any church leader on difficult doctrines like predestination. He hardly took any vacations as time away from his social work made him feel guilty and that he was not pleasing God in taking a holiday. He did not have much of bible study on his own as he was too tired from his work and social work to do anything. Gradually his ministry grew and he was even offered to sit on the board of Malaysian Care an NGO which did a lot of social work. He did not accept the offer because he did not find Malaysian Care sincere in their efforts to help the poor. His circle of friends grew smaller and smaller as they could not stand his constant negativism on the faults of others. He started taking a lot of time off his work under the guise of sick leave because he wanted to serve the poor more.

**1. Would you invite Thye Hong to lead the social ministry in your church if you had any authority to make the decision? Why or why not**

I would not invite him notwithstanding his skills and dedication in social ministry simply because of the fact that he really lacks spiritual maturity as evidenced by the critical spirit in running everyone down.

**2. What are the signs that Thye Hong is not really spiritual and under judgement of God. What are the signs of dead orthodoxy or activism**

He is equating his own spirituality with his ability and achievements in helping the poor. This type of gospel distortion makes a usually important issue in this case helping the poor to be the ultimate issue that acts as a litmus test to see whether someone is a 'true Christian or truly spiritual' Thye Hong has overemphasized the evil outside of people to the neglect of the evil that is inside them. This distortion defines Christian maturity as "a willingness to help the poor" and often *reduces the gospel to participation in helping the poor.*

He has a theoretical-only stance toward the Word of God. (v.21) "You who teach others — do you teach yourself?" This means that the person loves the concepts of the truth, but never comes under, never feels its power. The "moralist" or dead orthodox person is seldom or never "under conviction." A real Christian finds the Bible "alive and active" (Heb.4:12), with a life of its own, constantly convicting, comforting, thrilling, disturbing, melting, lifting you up, slamming you down.

2. There is a subtle or obvious moral superiority. (v.17) "You...brag." (v.19) "A light for those who are in the dark." If Thye is relying on his spiritual achievements (social action or religious observance), he will have to "look down" on those who have failed in the same areas. Moralists/dead orthodox are at least "cold" and at worst very judgmental toward those who are struggling. They have no warm words of encouragement to them. A sign of this condition is that he is not approachable — people don't want to share their problems with him. He is not a sympathetic person. In addition, moralists/dead orthodox tend to gossip and backbiting and great defensiveness

3. Most important, there is a total lack of an “inner life.” (v.29) “circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit”. This is a most vivid image — a circumcised heart is one spiritually melted and softened. It means to have an active prayer life, a sense of the presence and nearness of God. Now that is something that moralistic and/or the dead orthodox do not have regularly. They may get “feelings” when they are caught up in the liturgy or excitement of a corporate service, but they are radically unsure that God loves them, and so they experience a long-term deadness within. (This is not to say that a real Christian always has great quiet times!)

4. There may be outright hypocrisy and a “double-life” (v.22). It is possible that the “pillar of the church” is having an affair or is dishonest in business as in this case he is cheating his employer by taking sick days off.

### **3. How can we help him overcome this or should we just leave him alone?**

#### **Case 4**

**Boon Hock was attending the 5<sup>th</sup> Baptist church of Klang and was a new deacon and was planning his first baptism service. He told the church they had to be baptized as the Lord commanded it and it is necessary for salvation just like circumcision for the Jew  
He quoted Martin Luther**

**"Baptism is no human plaything but is instituted by God himself. Moreover, it is solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we shall not be saved. We are not to regard it as an indifferent matter, then, like putting on a new red coat. It is of the greatest importance that we regard baptism as excellent, glorious, and exalted" (*Large Catechism* 4:6).**

He also quoted Augustine

**"There are three ways in which sins are forgiven: in baptism, in prayer, and in the greater humility of penance; yet God does not forgive sins except to the baptized" (*Sermons to Catechumens on the Creed* 7:15 [A.D. 395]).**

### **1. Do you agree with Boon Hock and Martin Luther?**

- 2. Can you read Romans 2:25-29 and 1 Peter 3:21 ESV Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and use it to explain to Boon Hock your position?**

It is clear that baptisms as like circumcision cannot save you from judgement as the Jews relied upon it as clearly stated in Romans 2

The 1 Peter passage says it most clearly when it says that baptism saves you ...yes it does...surprise surprise .....but wait for it....not the outward ceremony of it..

“Not the removal of dirt from the body” Which means the ritual or act of being immersed in the water which symbolizes washing of dirt , that does not save you. Peter adds it is the appeal to God for a good conscience which means it is the inner disposition of the heart in faith trusting in the death and resurrection of Jesus and repentance that saves us not the outward ceremony

## **Case 5**

**Grace read Romans 3:1-5 and was very disappointed because it was clear that even though the Jews had the Torah and were God’s chosen people they were still condemned in the end. She then applied it to Christians and said**

**“You mean I can say the sinner’s prayer, be baptized, attend church, do Christian ministry and pay my tithing to God and yet at the end of the day I can still be condemned by God?”**

**Doesn’t Jesus say “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; 28 and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand,” ([John 10:27-28](#)).**

**God cannot be trusted to be faithful enough to save me in the end?**

- 1. Doesn’t the faithfulness of God imply that Grace will be saved in the end because she is a Christian. How can God be still faithful if He lets the Jews enter judgement?**

The Jews took pride in their special position as the chosen people of God who had received God’s laws. God promised to be their God and they his people. However Paul in Romans 9 says *“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, 7 and not all are children of Abraham because they are his offspring, but “Through Isaac shall your offspring be named.” 8 This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring” (Romans 9:6-8 ESV)*

He is saying that salvation was never based on the laws of inheritance. The Jew is not saved by virtue of being a Jew or having the law or being part of the chosen race of God. It is based on faith in God’s promise.

In the same way mere external performance of religious activities like going to church and doing ministry or belonging to a particular church is no passport to salvation. It is genuine faith in Jesus which will be evidenced by a transformed life in obedience to the law.

John says in *"Therefore we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us"* (1 John 2:18-19 ESV)

Hence people who leave the fellowship and do not live obedient lifestyles might not be genuine Christians and come under judgment in the same way that Jews who are Jews in name and do not live in obedience will also be condemned. For true Christians God will protect them and guide them into an obedient life style like Abraham. He was given the covenant and set of blessings which he received because God guided him into obedience with the seminal moment in Genesis 22 when he was truly obedient willing to offer his son for a sacrifice. This act confirmed his intrinsic faith and sealed his inheritance of the promises of blessing. Since that time his descendants have relied upon physical descent or outward performance of rituals which were designed to be an expression of an inner faith and trust in God and His promises but they degenerated into just an outward form or show without inward faith. This hollow show of religion is what Paul is writing against in Romans 3. Hence when God rejects them He is not faithless he is being consistent. He is still faithful because He has a faithful remnant who will be true to their faith in Him